



# Passing the Budget

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, June 18, 2007

## City Hall Diary

Whew—just before midnight, we passed the budget!

After many long budget hearings, staff presentations, public testimony and robbing Peter to pay Paul, we have a “balanced” budget.

The City of San Jose cannot borrow funds like the federal government. Therefore, we must balance our books every year. We do have bonds to pay for our capital projects such as new libraries, fire stations and parks; but for the most part, we have to make sure we have funds that match expenses—which is one of the most difficult jobs of a city government.

As hard as it was this year to find funding for much needed projects and to make an attempt to be fair to all people, it will be an even harder task next year to meet the same expectations.

I believe that the city needs to spend money prudently. We should not convert industrial land that will create revenue for the city and not be “lawsuit happy.” The city had to pay over \$30 million to settle just two lawsuits. One was to take land away from a small business owner (Tropicana), and the other was to sue the county because we had an issue about who could build an outside theater. Now, neither the city nor county have an amphitheater. What the city council could have paid for with the \$30+ million we wasted on lawsuits.

The budget process is tough, even for folks like me who consider themselves penny savers. For example, I supported allocating \$257,000 to EHC for their homeless center rather than funding the “insourcing” of the graveyard shift janitors at \$1.2 million a year. There are some that argue that bringing janitors on as fulltime employees is a better use of money than providing for the homeless, but I disagree.

I requested that EHC put their financials on their website.

As I have mentioned before, any non-profit group receiving over \$100,000 from the city should have their audited financials posted on their public facing website. They agreed. To compare, I supported \$257,000 to assist 125 homeless people rather than spend \$1.2 million a year for 25 janitors, who are already employed with a living wage and medical benefits, to become city employees.

At the end of the final budget hearing, my request to put aside almost \$1 million to help fund public/private partnerships for park maintenance was accepted by the city council. I felt a sense of camaraderie at that moment and I was honored that my fellow council members supported this request. It is an allocation that if used innovatively and appropriately, could be put to good use for all parks in San Jose.

Other choices and questions that we will have to make in the future include funding for "green" (LEED certified) buildings. Are we willing to spend more on one building even though that may mean we sacrifice a new library for another San Jose neighborhood?

What ideas and thoughts do you have regarding the budget?

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